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## **A Little Extra Funding Means a Lot**

*By Judy Sarasohn*

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In the big-money world of federal appropriations, sometimes relatively small amounts are nothing to sneeze at.

Indeed, the legal services community is thrilled that Congress approved in the omnibus appropriations bill \$9.5 million more for the Legal Services Corp., a longtime target of conservative Republicans, than President Bush's request of \$329.3 million.

Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) had sought \$19 million more, to help 26 states that would be losing significant amounts of federal legal aid funding in fiscal 2003 because of shifts in state poverty populations. Federal law requires the LSC to distribute funds based on the most recent census data. Harkin had some GOP support in the Senate, particularly from Pete V. Domenici (N.M.) and Gordon Smith (Ore.).

While LSC lawyers are prohibited from lobbying, the National Legal Aid and Defender Association (NLADA) organized a grass-roots effort to lobby lawmakers. Lawyers in private practice, the American Bar Association and members of the National Organization of Legal Services Workers, the union representing workers in federally funded legal services programs, called lawmakers from the states that were hit hard by the new census numbers.

LSC supporters were concerned that the Washington atmosphere of deficits and tax cuts would work to their disadvantage. And some LSC supporters worried that Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.), chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee with jurisdiction over LSC funding, would hold fast to the president's budget numbers.

"We worked steadily since July . . . against some serious odds," said **Julie Clark**, NLADA's senior vice president for government relations. Wolf said yesterday that there was no controversy over the LSC funding and that he was not subjected to any lobbying campaign. House and Senate appropriations conferees split the difference between Bush's budget and Harkin's \$19 million addition.

"This is a program that helps the poor. . . . We've always been for the program," Wolf said.

Yet LSC supporters noted that the program has fought to survive over the years, and has had only level funding the past few years.

"If you look at the history of the LSC, you realize the tremendous symbolic meaning of getting \$10 million," said **Eric D. Kleiman**, communications director for the LSC.